



Richland County Council
Coronavirus AD Hoc Committee Meeting
MINUTES
June 29, 2022 – 4:30 PM
Council Chambers
2020 Hampton Street, Columbia, SC 29204

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT: Gretchen Barron, Chair and Paul Livingston

OTHERS PRESENT:

1. **CALL TO ORDER** – Chairwoman Gretchen Barron called the meeting to order at approximately 4:30 PM.

2. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- a. June 23, 2022 – Mr. Livingston moved to approve the minutes as distributed, seconded by Ms. Barron.

In Favor: Livingston and Barron

Not Present: Newton

The vote in favor was unanimous.

3. **ADOPTION OF AGENDA** – Mr. Leonardo Brown, County Administrator, requested to add G.A.N.G.S. and Peace Initiative under “Other Items” on the agenda.

Mr. Livingston moved to adopt the agenda as amended, seconded by Ms. Barron.

In Favor: Livingston and Barron

Not Present: Newton

The vote in favor was unanimous.

4. **ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION/ACTION**

- a. Review of Council Approve Funding Recommendations – Ms. Barron stated the committee will have to determine if they want to use a Third-Party qualifier and/or reviewer for the grants, the qualifications for approval and organization’s eligibility to apply in multiple categories.

Mr. Brown stated Council has determined how to grant access to the ARP funds through a grant application. An applications was previously presented to the committee. Since that time, it has been updated with the feedback from the committee. He thought it would be important to have equity and transparency when deciding who did and did not qualify and to have another arm that was separate from County Administration and staff. The recommendation is to have a third-party qualifier and/or reviewer to state what programs are in alignment under the Federal Treasury guidelines before they come before the committee for consideration/approval of the award.

Ms. Barron inquired if the third-party would be found with through a request for qualifications (RFQ), the timeframe and if they could use the Administrator's power to expedite the process.

Mr. Brown stated he is not sure if this qualifies as professional services, but staff will submit an RFQ and communicate why one vendor was chosen over another.

Ms. Barron stated she wants to move as quickly as possible to get the funds out to the community. She inquired if the third-party would be responsible for the review process.

Mr. Brown responded in the affirmative. He noted they would screen the applicants based on the criteria from the committee.

Mr. Livingston inquired how the role of staff would change with a third-party qualifier.

Mr. Brown responded staff would provide technical assistance for people applying. When awards are made, staff would provide funding to the approved agencies. Staff would not be determining eligibility.

Ms. Barron inquired if there was a standard operating procedure for third-parties.

Mr. Brown responded it would be dictated by the scope of service.

Ms. Barron inquired who would determine the scope of service.

Mr. Brown responded staff would make the determination.

Ms. Barron noted Ms. McBride inquired about utilizing a community panel. She inquired if that was something we could include in the process.

Ms. Jennifer Wladischkin, Procurement Director, stated the Administrator could issue a procurement for a \$100,000 threshold for an RFP. The typical process for formal solicitation is 30 days, plus an evaluation process of 2 days to 2 weeks depending on the number of submission received. The Administrator has the authority to shorten that timeframe. They would then negotiate a contract, which would need to fall under the Administrator's \$100,000 threshold. The entire process would be approximately 45-60 days.

Mr. Livingston moved to move forward with procuring a third-party vendor, seconded by Ms. Barron.

In Favor: Livingston and Barron

Not Present: Newton

The vote in favor was unanimous.

Ms. Barron stated, if they are going to utilize the Treasury guidelines, it needs to be stated in the application as there will be people who are not accustomed to grants, but may be eligible for the grants. Ms. Barron inquired if Mr. Brown had a recommendation for the committee as it relates to the criteria.

Mr. Brown responded it is best to stay with the Treasury guidelines. The criteria of who they want to award funds will determine the rest. For example, if there are two entities requesting the same amount to provide affordable housing and one program would impact 50% of the population and another entity would impact 5%, they might prefer awarding the entity that would be more impactful, even though they both are qualified. It would be best to follow the Treasury guidelines and create a criteria on how to award the most impactful applications until the funds dwindle down. You need to determine how you want to make those funds accessible and not whittle down the Treasury's broad guidance.

Mr. Livingston stated they have created broad categories and people will apply based on those categories. As long as they meet the Treasury requirements, they need to make recommendations based on what is best for the County.

Ms. Barron noted she wants to keep it as clean as possible and review those that qualify and make awards.

Ms. Livingston stated on the application it needs to be clear which category they are applying for.

Ms. Barron inquired if they should allow an organization with several programs to apply for different categories of funding.

Mr. Livingston moved to allow an organization to apply for up to three categories of funding, seconded by Ms. Barron.

Mr. Brown stated there could not be duplicate services, when it comes to grant applications.

Ms. Barron noted it was not mentioned on the applications. We need to discuss the difference between "supplementing" and "supplanting".

In Favor: Livingston and Barron

Not Present: Newton

The vote in favor was unanimous.

Mr. Brown inquired how we would like to handle the community reviewers. Would the application go into a pot and potentially be reviewed by the community reviewers? Once reviewed, would the recommendations come back to committee or Council for consideration?

Ms. Barron responded the recommendations should come back to committee.

Mr. Brown recommended the committee formalize the process for community reviewers and how those reviewers will be selected.

Mr. Livingston stated he was not keen on the idea of community reviewers. He is concerned about delaying the process.

Ms. Barron inquired if the third-party reviewers would be taking place of staff and the community reviewers would make a recommendation to the committee.

Mr. Brown responded in terms of qualifying.

Mr. Livingston stated they would have to decide the makeup of the group, the selection process and the meeting schedule.

Ms. Barron inquired if there was previously a process in place for this.

Mr. Brown responded it was before his time but it was done after the 2015 flood. Eventually, the group was unable to maintain a quorum and a lot of work could not be done.

Ms. Barron stated they should circle back to the community reviewers.

Mr. Brown stated the proposed process is:

- Staff initiates information about the application process
- Eligible participants submit to be qualified
- Third-Party qualifier reviews the applications
- Qualified applications come to committee for consideration

Mr. Brown inquired if the committee is going to establish criteria on how to review the applications. What information should staff share with the applicant(s) on the committee's respective ranking of projects?

Ms. Barron inquired if Mr. Brown is speaking of a scoring rubric.

Mr. Brown responded that is a good example.

Ms. Barron stated the current grants team and the third-party vendor could determine that information.

Mr. Livingston wanted Council to give the committee clear criteria.

Ms. Barron moved to use a criteria similar to the current discretionary grant process, seconded by Mr. Livingston.

In Favor: Livingston and Barron

Not Present: Newton

The vote in favor was unanimous.

b. Next Steps:

1. Proposed grant applications
2. Proposed application process

Mr. Brown will provide a briefing document to Council detailing the committee's recommendations as they pertain to the grant application and the application process.

5. Other Topics

- a. G.A.N.G.S. and Peace Initiative – Mr. Brown this initiative is a culmination or work from the community in partnership with the City of Columbia and Richland County Sheriff's Department. In an effort to stop the violence, this initiative has a list of activities such as

organized tournaments like midnight basketball, camps, retreats, boxing programs, football programs and other programs. The requested amount is \$200,000.

Ms. Barron inquired if there is a recommendation from the committee to assist this community group, within the guidelines of how we plan to move forward with administering the funds.

Mr. Brown stated the application process, previously discussed, would be further out and this request is something Council expressed interest in. He did not want them to miss this opportunity. He did not recommend waiting for the application process, as it has not been established. He recommended forwarding this item to Council for a final determination.

Mr. Livingston stated he was reluctant to add this item to the agenda as it came with little information, but he understood it was urgent to address what is currently going on. He does not think the current proposal will get approved as there is no clear budget details, who will be participating (i.e. partners) and if the organization is a 501(c)3.

Ms. Barron stated Council has previously given to other organizations with less information. She noted this project has been working for over 30 days and she would like to see Richland County get involved. She supports requesting additional information before it is presented to full Council.

Mr. Livingston stated, for clarification, for the process to be successful, Council needs more information, so we do not debate the matter during the Council meeting. He noted it was his intention to forward this item to Council, but he does not want to forward it and it not go anywhere.

Mr. Livingston moved to forward this item to Council and request additional information, seconded by Ms. Barron.

In Favor: Livingston and Barron

Not Present: Newton

The vote in favor was unanimous.

6. **ADJOURNMENT** – Mr. Livingston moved to adjourn, seconded by Ms. Barron.

In Favor: Livingston and Barron

Not Present: Newton

The vote in favor was unanimous.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 5:30 PM.